



Discipline at Hyde School

DISCIPLINE

HONESTY: Attitudes vs. infractions BROTHER'S KEEPER CASE STUDY: Debbie & Jim

A discussion of discipline at Hyde School must begin with our school's ethics. These concern issues of lying, cheating, stealing, sexual behavior, drugs, tobacco, alcohol and what we call Brother's Keeper. The standards pertaining to these ethics are thoroughly explained by the Dean of Students on the first night of school. Students are expected to adhere to these ethics with a positive attitude.

HONESTY: Attitudes vs. infractions

This expectation of a positive attitude constitutes much of the grey area which sometimes surfaces with teenagers in regard to rules. For example, consider a teenager who goes downtown in an attempt to buy marijuana, but is unable to locate a dealer. Has that teenager broken an ethic of the school? In a world of rules, as exists at most traditional schools, the student probably would not be penalized. (Indeed, it is doubtful that the school would ever learn of this action.) Now throw the question of attitude into the equation as we do here at Hyde. In this light, there's no question that a discipline problem is involved in this incident. As we are fond of saying, "*We do not discipline infractions at Hyde; we discipline attitudes.*"

Many schools operate from what I call a discipline "menu": infractions are listed down the left side of the page as are the entrees on a restaurant menu and the cost of each infraction is listed on the right side as are the prices. We, at Hyde, do not play that game. Here, it is entirely possible for two students to commit an infraction, such as smoking cigarettes together, and yet receive different programs of discipline because of differences in their attitudes and levels of honesty.

A veteran student will answer the following question: "*What is the most serious infraction you can commit at Hyde School?*" - with a consistent answer: "lie." While careful emphasis is placed on all the ethics, we are especially emphatic about lying. Students are expected to honor the spirit of the truth, not simply the letter of it. If I accuse Johnny of smoking Marlboros with Debbie and he thinks his denial puts him in the clear because they were, in fact, smoking Camels, Johnny is lying. Positive growth must rest on a foundation of honesty. It's no small coincidence that among Hyde's Five Words and Five Principles, three deal directly with the notion of truth. In fact, the Principle of Truth states: "*Truth is our primary guide.*" This point is made almost incessantly to new

students when they arrive at Hyde School. Before we examine specific disciplinary approaches used at Hyde School, lets take a moment to consider Brother's Keeper.

BROTHER'S KEEPER

Most of Hyde's ethics are easily understandable by anyone. The fact that we do not allow students to take drugs and that we penalize them for stealing from their peers does not surprise them; nor are students surprised to learn that cheating is not tolerated. After all, Hyde is an academic college preparatory school. The "rub" with the vast majority of Hyde students comes with the concept of Brother's Keeper. Simply put, students are expected to act upon the disciplinary infractions and attitudes of their peers. They are expected to hold each other accountable. For example, if you are not a smoker but you're walking downtown with Johnny, who lights up a cigarette, you have a responsibility to do something about that. You must tell Johnny to turn himself in to the Dean's Office and make it clear that if he doesn't, you will. If we later become aware of Johnny's smoking and it becomes clear that you knew he had smoked and that you had not acted upon it, you will be treated as if you were in the same boat as Johnny. This is a bitter pill for Hyde's students to swallow. When a young student first learns of Brother's Keeper, he or she will invariably say something like "*No way! I'm not going to 'narc' on my friends*". In most schools, a student would commit social suicide if he or she turned a classmate in for breaking the rules of the school. Not so at Hyde.

In the early stages of a student's involvement, not much time is spent explaining why Brother's Keeper is a good thing. Usually a student must experience the benefits of the concept before he or she can enforce it with a full heart. Are there benefits? The degree to which Hyde's newer students hold the concept in disdain is matched by a fierce loyalty by older, more veteran students. They understand that if, for example, three members of our basketball team are smoking, the team is simply not going to achieve what it set out to achieve as a team - its best. The players who are smoking are holding the team back. When viewed in this context, smoking is a very selfish act and benefits no one. As the Principle of Brother's Keeper formally states, "We help others achieve their best." Hyde students have learned that if they push others and others push them, the total benefit will be greater than the sum of its parts.

Part of the difficulty of the acceptance of Brother's Keeper lies in the fact that a student's initial association with the concept is usually a negative one. Either a student has committed a violation of the ethics and does not want to accept accountability for it, or one has witnessed another student committing a violation and would rather not get involved in the ugly social repercussions of turning a

fellow student in. However, later on, after a student begins to perform well academically, scores a few goals out on the soccer field or sings a solo in a school production, the student realizes that he or she might never have accomplished these things without the positive peer pressure of Brother's Keeper. After these experiences the student generally regards Brother's Keeper in a positive light.

CASE STUDY: Debbie & Jim

Perhaps the best way to understand Hyde's discipline program is through a hypothetical case study. Let's follow two students through the different levels of the program. Consider a boy named Jim and his friend Debbie who are new students at Hyde School. On their first night at Hyde the Dean explains the ethics. Jim and Debbie have heard these kinds of admonitions before. Disregarding them, they then go out and smoke. An older student observes them smoking and asks them to turn themselves in to the Dean. They look at the student incredulously and say "*You've got to be kidding!?*". They refuse to comply and the student turns Jim and Debbie in to the Dean. At that point, Jim and Debbie will separately sit down with the Dean of Students who will remind them that they made a commitment to follow the ethics of the school and having broken that commitment, need to accept some accountability. They will undoubtedly be placed on 5:30.

Jim and Debbie will be told to meet in front of the Student Union at 5:30 on the following morning where they will be supervised by members of the Dean's Office (usually students, often those who spent a good deal of time in disciplinary activities themselves when they were younger students at Hyde) as they rake leaves, shovel snow, sweep walks, pick up litter, etc. The number of mornings that they will be expected to do this will depend completely on their attitudes. If they're on time in the morning, work reasonably hard for the hour prior to breakfast and don't lip off to their supervisors, they will likely do this for a total of three mornings. At the conclusion of their discipline, they will sit down with a group of students and faculty from the Dean's Office and discuss what they have learned from this endeavor. The commitment that they made at the interview will be re-examined and they will be expected to state in a one page paper how they intend to follow the ethics for the remainder of the year.

I remember once when I was a young kid at the amusement park in Old Orchard Beach, Maine. Somewhere in the arcade there were a couple of benches with a sign over them which read "*Do Not Sit On These Benches*". I walked over to the bright red benches, observed the sign above them and could think of no earthly reason why someone could not sit on them. They were clearly

BUILDING BLOCKS: *The Hyde Education*

- a chain reaction
- an evolutionary process
- culminates with a Hyde graduation
- ultimate goal: the Hyde DIPLOMA

MOTIONS

TAKER

- * The "motions" of responsible behavior
- * "Move the body and the mind will follow"
- * Expectations are set almost exclusively by the faculty
- * Sometimes an unpleasant phase
- * The foundation for the discovery of unique potential is set

EFFORT

DOER

- * Beginnings of a positive attitude
- * "If I have to do this I might as well do it well"
- * Expectations are shared. The student-teacher bond is formed. A partnership begins to evolve.
- * Creativity begins

EXCELLENCE

GIVER

- * Concept of one's BEST
- * Student is "Majority Shareholder" in student-faculty partnership
- * "Prime the pump": givers assume responsibility for the growth of the takers
- * Graduation ----- A commitment for the DIPLOMA
- * Faculty & Parents "let go" of the student

FOUNDATION

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in good order, well built, well maintained. Not only could I not think of a conceivable reason why one couldn't sit on them, I couldn't imagine why someone would go to the trouble to make a sign stating so. I then sat down on one of the benches and received an electric shock. That's the kind of kid I was. I had to see for myself. I'd say the typical Hyde student is much the same. A majority of Hyde's kids will test the ethics (to see what the fuss is all about), will serve their accountability and then will go on and do what they came here to do: learn and grow. Chances are that Jim and Debbie won't have future problems with the Dean's Office. Let's say they do.

A week later, Jim and Debbie, feeling good about the five days that they've just spent in classes, are walking downtown. They celebrate with another cigarette, entering into a pact not to tell on the other if one is caught. Let's say that Debbie, who is beginning to perform well in academics and sports, has a guilty conscience over what they've done. She talks about it with the Captain of the Soccer team and after this conversation decides to turn herself in. Jim is then called in to the Dean's Office. He sticks to the pact. He doesn't tell the truth even after he's told that Debbie has confessed to the smoking. Jim considers it a trap of some sort and stays with his story. Even when Debbie is brought into the room, Jim continues to lie, stating that it's his word against Debbie's (and proving that there is little honor among thieves and those who violate school ethics!). Although both students have committed the same ethical violation, we now have a case where the two exhibit different attitudes and different levels of respect for the truth. This calls for something stiffer than "5:30". Jim and Debbie would then go out on what the students call "2-4".

2-4 stands for 24 hour work crew. The student does not, in fact, work for 24 consecutive hours, but he or she is pulled out of the regular program of the school. There will be no participation in classes, sports, nor other regularly scheduled activities and programs. The message to the student is simple: *"Since you have demonstrated that you do not intend to follow the Hyde program in an honorable fashion, the school will offer you a program which is much 'easier' to follow."* Supervised by the school's Maintenance Department, Jim and Debbie will work around the grounds during the hours that other students are engaged in the curriculum of the school. The fact that students often consider this cruel and unusual punishment says more about our society than it does about Hyde School. The tasks that these students are performing are those done by millions of Americans every day in order to put bread on the table for their families. That students will often view this as cruel and unusual punishment reminds us that today the concept of chores is a foreign one belonging to a bygone era. In many cases, students simply haven't been asked in the past to do many things that they don't want to do.

Thus, when they are required to do something that they truly don't want to do, they consider it cruel and unusual. They will very well call home and try to get their parents to bail them out of this horrible predicament.

To return to Jim and Debbie: By this point, Debbie is beginning to see Hyde School in a more positive light. She buckles down to work for two or three days and meets all of her obligations on time. In her Concern Meeting with the Dean's staff it appears that she has learned something from her experience. Debbie will be released from 2-4. On the other hand, Jim has been showing up late, liping off to his supervisors, and doing all of his tasks in a half-hearted manner. Chances are good that Jim will be on 2-4 for a few more days, maybe longer.

Sometimes it can reach a point where Jim's attitude causes difficulty for his supervisors out on the grounds. Let's assume that his insubordinate, disrespectful conduct intensifies over time. At this point, Jim might be required to be put in a position of what is sometimes termed "meaningless" 2-4. In other words, he may be expected to perform a purposeless task; for example, weeding a section of the campus where no one goes. Students have been asked to dig a big hole in the back woods of the campus or go out and sweep the track and field complex. What we are saying by requiring this is, *"Jim, you've demonstrated that you're not willing to follow the program at all, so we're going to remove you from it completely. You are in complete control over how long this will last but you have become a major burden to work with. Therefore, we're going to arrange matters in such a way that you will be a burden only to yourself."* At this point, we are looking for any sign from Jim that he sees the connection between his attitude and the meaningless nature of his tasks. This step is not one that is taken lightly. It is a clear message to Jim that he will not be permitted to make a mockery of the school and its disciplinary standards.

Taking this scenario to a final level, let's assume that while Jim was on his fourth day of 2-4 he managed to have a cigarette from a pack that he had hidden somewhere during his first few days at school. Let's also assume that he was seen smoking by the maintenance staff. This act would demonstrate that Jim saw the entire process as little more than a joke. This would demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jim was not willing to comply with the program. Chances are there are other students in school in Jim's boat and it is for these students that the *Wilderness Outpost* has been designed.

With the *Wilderness Outpost*, faculty supervisors take a group of eight to twelve students to a wilderness site or perhaps an island off the coast of Maine. The students are fully equipped with supplies and camping equipment. The

message that they are given is:

You've demonstrated that you're not going to follow the Hyde program; therefore, we'll give you a program you can follow. If you want to have a bad attitude out here, that's fine. Now only you and others in the group will suffer the consequences of your attitude. On the other hand, if you demonstrate a positive attitude and come together as a group, we will return to school soon and you will be back in the regular school program. If you continue to exhibit the attitude which brought you here, you will remain out here indefinitely. The choice is yours."

In this instance, the faculty member's role is to provide a safe environment and to supervise a project undertaken by the group. Past groups have built campsites in the wilderness for other campers to enjoy. One summer a hiking trail that others could use for exploration was built by a group camping out on Seguin Island. The Wilderness Outpost generally lasts for a week to ten days but has been known to extend longer. It entirely depends upon the attitudes within the group.

CONCLUSION

What is the purpose of this approach to discipline? The point is simple. We believe that individuals should be accountable for their actions. A student who chooses to smoke, drink, lie or cheat has made a decision to violate the ethics he or she earlier agreed to follow. There are consequences for this decision. While this explains Hyde's standpoint from a negative view, the positive perspective is more important. We have learned that a student can't pursue his or her personal growth in earnest with a conscience anything less than clear. If a student attempts to do the Hyde program while sneaking cigarettes on the side, there is no way that he or she can ultimately succeed. Success at Hyde School requires wholehearted commitment. We would venture that most serious endeavors in life require the same. The forward surge that a student takes after clearing his or her conscience is an inspiring phenomenon to behold. Initially, a student not only resists the opportunity to clear his or her conscience but will often protest as well. After consciences have been cleared and accountability has been served, students generally feel better about themselves. They are better equipped to pursue excellence within the Hyde curriculum.

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